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Evan Ramstad. **Las Vegas Review - Journal.** Las Vegas, Nev.: Jul 10, 1996. pg. 8.D

Abstract (Summary)

NEW YORK - After months of promises by big-name computer firms for a lower-cost device to access the Internet, an unknown has jumped ahead with a computer for browsing the World Wide Web from a TV.

WebTV Networks Inc., a Silicon Valley startup firm that has stayed quiet amid the Internet hoopla, is emerging with two powerful partners.

For Web users accustomed to browsers with all the buttons and command lines, the product will seem free of clutter. Rather than a cursor arrow manipulated by a mouse or trackball, the WebTV machine is run by a simple remote control with arrow and scroll buttons. A wireless keyboard is optional.

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Full Text (542 words)

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Associated Press

NEW YORK - After months of promises by big-name computer firms for a lower-cost device to access the Internet, an unknown has jumped ahead with a computer for browsing the World Wide Web from a TV.

WebTV Networks Inc., a Silicon Valley startup firm that has stayed quiet amid the Internet hoopla, is emerging with two powerful partners.

©Sony Electronics Inc. and Philips Consumer Electronics Co. will announce plans today to produce and sell machines based on WebTV's technology in September.

"We're very itchy to get this device on the market," said Jim Bonan, vice president of new business development at ©Sony's consumer products group. "I believe it will be the most exciting thing in the consumer electronics market."

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this fall."

Price will be a few hundred dollars, well below the \$500 price tag tossed about by some computer industry executives as a low-cost target.

"We view boxes that are in the \$500 price range to be specialty products," said Steve Perlman, chief executive officer of WebTV Networks. "WebTV has been designed to appeal to the broad market."

A key reason it costs so much less is the machine is designed only to browse the Web and share electronic mail instead of all the other things that a personal computer does. Its operating and browsing program is small and efficient and can be updated by the company when a user is online.

For Web users accustomed to browsers with all the buttons and command lines, the product will seem free of clutter. Rather than a cursor arrow manipulated by a mouse or trackball, the WebTV machine is run by a simple remote control with arrow and scroll buttons. A wireless keyboard is optional.

"They figured out how to make a Web site look pretty decent on a TV screen and they figured out how to use a remote control as an easy way to navigate," said David Coursey, editor of Coursey.Com, a technology industry newsletter in Redwood City, Calif. "At a high level, they look pretty good. As you dig down, there are some limitations you have to deal with."

The most important limit is that the machine's operating and browsing software are different from the Netscape and Microsoft programs that now influence the Web.

Most people creating Web information try to take advantage of the features in those programs. For instance, the Java programming language has been used to put animation into Web pages that can be viewed with Netscape or Microsoft browsers. That won't work on WebTV's product.

But if WebTV's device takes off, producers of Web content will have to take its software into account just as they do Netscape's and Microsoft's.

"Your Web site will have to do a query, 'What browser am I sending to?' and your (content creation software) will have to adapt," Coursey said.

The WebTV machine uses a powerful 112MHz processing chip from Integrated Device Technology Inc. of Santa Clara, Calif., and has a 33,600 bits per second modem, slightly faster than the current standard in PCs.

Another Silicon Valley company, Diba Inc., has been working on a similar low-cost Web access idea and will incorporate it into TVs by Zenith Electronics later this year.

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